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# ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE EMPA'S PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS: CONTRIBUTION OR OBSTACLE? <sup>1</sup>

Stelios STAVRIDIS <sup>2</sup> and Roderick PACE <sup>3</sup>

## ***Abstract***

This chapter analyzes Euro-Mediterranean relations from the perspective of their parliamentary angle, and

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is an updated version of Stelios Stavridis and Roderick Pace, «The EMPA and parliamentary diplomacy in the Mediterranean: a preliminary assessment», in Stelios Stavridis, Natividad Fernández Sola (eds.), *Factores políticos y de seguridad en el área euro-mediterránea*, Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, 2009, pp. 125-148. An earlier draft was also presented as a paper entitled, *Una evaluación de la diplomacia parlamentaria de la APEM en los conflictos internacionales del Mediterráneo*, to the JORNADA de la Cátedra Jean Monnet del Profesor Garzón Clariana: Asamblea Euromediterránea en el marco de la Presidencia Española (Barcelona, 16 April 2010).

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in particular from the role that the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly plays in the numerous international conflicts that exist in the region. The chapter's main objective is to present an assessment by concentrating on three such examples: the Middle East, Cyprus and the Western Sahara. The conclusion is that so far there has been to a large extent an unproductive near-obsession with the Palestinian issue, whereas on the contrary, there is no interest whatsoever in the other two conflicts. The reasons for this are many but the main one can be summarized as follows: the external effects of the latter two conflicts can more or less be contained. Those of the Middle East cannot. It is argued that such a poor record is not only due to the intrinsic difficulties of the conflicts involved, but also reflects badly on the real and potential role that parliamentary diplomacy can and should play in conflict resolution.

## INTRODUCTION

Studies on Euro-Mediterranean relations abound. Ever since the initial years of the European integration process the policies of the then EEC towards the Mediterranean have taken a prominent seat<sup>4</sup>. Following the collapse of the Cold War order, the EEC re-created itself as the European Union (EU) through the Maastricht Treaty, the first in a long saga of institutional treaty reforms culminating in the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. During this period the EU revised and revamped its policies towards the Southern rim of the Mediterranean by launching in 1995 the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), also known as the Barcelona Process<sup>5</sup>. However, further enlargements

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<sup>4</sup> For a history see Filippou Pierros, Jacob Meunier, Stan Abrams, Bridges and Barriers, *The European Union's Mediterranean Policy, 1961-1998*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Fulvio Attinà, Stelios Stavridis (eds.), *The Barcelona Process and Euro-Mediterranean Issues from Stuttgart to Marseilles*, Giuffrè, Milan, 2001; Haizam Amirah Fernández, Richard Youngs (eds.), *The*

obliged it to look at its wider policy towards its immediate neighbourhood: in 2004 it launched the European Neighbourhood Policy; and in 2008-2009, following the 2007 initiative by President Sarkozy, the EU repackaged its policy towards the Mare Nostrum into a Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)<sup>6</sup>.

Most studies concentrate on the political, economic and the human rights dimensions of those relations and policies and also agree that the record to date is rather disappointing to say the least<sup>7</sup>. This chapter concentrates on a neglected area of academia: relations

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*Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Assessing the First Decade*, Elcano Royal Institute for International and Strategic Studies and the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), 2005: [www.realinstitutoelcano.org](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org).

<sup>6</sup> ISS Report, *Union for the Mediterranean-Building on the Barcelona acquis*, European Union Institute for Security Studies Report n.º 1 (Roberto Aliboni, George Joffe, Erwan Lannon, Azzam Mahjoub, Abdallah Saaf, Álvaro de Vasconcelos), Paris, 13 May 2008; Euromesco, «Putting the Mediterranean Union in Perspective», *Euromesco Report*, n.º 68 (Roberto Aliboni, Ahmed Driss, Tobias Schumacher, Alfred Tovias), June 2008: [www.euromesco.net](http://www.euromesco.net); Dorothee Schmid, *The Union for the Mediterranean: French Track or New European Policy*, The Jean Monnet Seminar Series, Malta European Studies Association & European Documentation Centre, University of Malta, 2008; Gonzalo Escribano and Alejandro Lorca, «“Proceso de Barcelona: Unión para el Mediterráneo”: ¿continuidad o ruptura», in Stelios Stavridis, Natividad Fernández Sola (eds.), *Factores políticos y de seguridad en el área euro-mediterránea*, Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, 2009, pp. 57-81; Bichara Khader, «L'Union pour la Méditerranée du Sommet de Paris (13 juillet 2008) à la Conférence de Marseille (3-4 novembre 2008)», in *ibid.*, pp. 83-109; *Special Issue on «Union for the Mediterranean: National and Regional Perspectives»* (Guest editors: Dimitris Xenakis and Panayotis Tsakonas), *Études Helleniques/Hellenic Studies*, vol. 17, n.º 2, Autumn, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Seeberg, «EU and the Mediterranean: Foreign Policy and Security», in Peter Seeberg (ed.), *EU and the Mediterranean: Foreign Policy and Security*, University Press of Southern Denmark, Odense, 2007, pp. 7-37; Stelios Stavridis, «The Barcelona Process, twelve years on: a critical overview», *Agora without Frontiers - A Quarterly Journal of International Economy and Politics*, vol. 13, n.º 4, March-May 2008, pp. 243-261.

between parliamentary bodies and parliamentarians. There is indeed very little academic interest in the question. However, this particular study will not deal with the parliamentary dimension of the EMP/UfM as such. Instead it will focus on a traditional area of IR interest: conflict resolution. It will do so by assessing the role played by the EMPA in conflict resolution by reference to three important and enduring international conflicts in the Mediterranean: the Middle East, Cyprus, and the Western Sahara.

The chapter is divided into the following parts: the Introduction presents an overview of why such a question is important in the first place. Part 1 addresses the question of the major changes that have occurred in the international system and the growing role of parliamentary bodies. Part 2 considers how this development affects the way parliamentary assemblies can act in conflictual situations, be it for conflict prevention or conflict resolution. Part 3 presents an overview of how the three conflicts mentioned impact on the EMP/UfM. Part 4 assesses the EMPA's impact on these three conflicts. In it, we try to answer the question of whether the EMPA's parliamentary diplomacy to date has helped or hindered conflict resolution in the Mediterranean.

### *Changes in the International System*

There are a number of reasons why parliaments are becoming important international actors. Tremendous changes have taken place in the international system in the last two decades which provides them with new opportunities of playing an important role in international affairs. But these changes in the international system are full of paradoxes. In 1991, the end of the Cold War had prompted President George H. W. Bush to declare that «we have before us the opportunity to forge for ourselves and for future generations a new world order, a

world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations»<sup>8</sup>.

And, on what would a world based on the rule of law depend if not on parliaments with the power to have the last word on what states do in international affairs? But despite this optimism of a «new world order» in recent years we have seen a resurgence of global military expenditure that surpasses the levels spent in 1988, just a year before the Cold War ended. This may be a tell-tale sign that while they are less inclined to resort to force than they were before, states have not lost their appetite for old-fashioned «power politics». According to figures provided by the Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in 2005-2008 the USA's annual military expenditure in real terms has surpassed the pre-Cold War levels (1988)<sup>9</sup>.

Hence, while in overall terms most states show a general tendency, still admittedly peppered with numerous outbursts of violence (*e. g.* Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza and Georgia), to seek peaceful resolution of conflicts, they are preparing for the eventuality that they would be forced to resort to war.

Another trend observable in international relations is that the ongoing process of Globalization (itself facilitated by the growing corpus of international treaties and conventions agreed to by states) has led to the creation of a number of organizations where states and a growing number of non-state actors interact in trying to govern and manage the whole process. This process makes political co-operation and integration increasingly more salient as Globalization widens and deepens.

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<sup>8</sup> George Bush, *Address to the Nation Announcing the start of Military Action in the Persian Gulf*, 16 January 1991: [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public\\_papers.php?id=2625&year=1991&month=01](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2625&year=1991&month=01).

<sup>9</sup> The SIPRI, *Military Expenditure Database*, Stockholm Peace Research Institute: <http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>.

States are still the main actors in international politics but other actors have emerged and seem to be growing. This appears to be the new stage in Globalisation.

The international system is also characterised by new security threats such as the rise of the phenomenon of international terrorism post 9/11, the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), particularly of nuclear weapons, and the persistence of rogue states which threaten to unbalance delicate regional and global equilibria as well as other nuisances such as piracy off the coasts of Somalia. But on the bright side, we have recently witnessed positive developments such as the START agreement between Russia and the USA, which is still in the process of ratification, the Nuclear Safety Summit held in Washington in April 2010 with the objective of strengthening the security around weapons-grade plutonium to ensure that it does not fall into the wrong hands and the five-yearly review which took place in May 2010 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The other aspect of the current international system is multi-polarity. Without joining the polemic as to whether multi-polarity has in reality always existed or not, or whether indeed multi-polarity has been achieved, it appears clear that it is being constantly enhanced as evidenced by the relative decline of the US and Europe in the world and the rise of «new» global actors such as China, India, Brazil and the re-emergence of Russia as a great power (the so-called BRICs). To these one can also add other states with a substantial influence in their region such as Japan, Indonesia and Iran. The main difference in the present multipolarism is that, whereas in the past the powers without a real global reach tended to confine themselves to their regions (China and India to Asia, Brazil to Latin America, Iran to the Gulf), what we witness now are strong, calculated, pincer movements using non-military means such as trade



agreements and investments, into regions traditionally perceived as the preserve of USA and European influence. All this has itself been facilitated by Globalization and by such international organizations as the World Trade Organization (WTO). What is also paradoxical is that the emergence of «new» global actors on the world scene and their increased influence in regions where they have historically enjoyed little or no influence as just outlined, contrasts sharply with the other trend commented upon earlier, of global increases in military expenditure. If interdependence, liberalisation, globally enforceable rules are the world powers' favourite tools in extending their influence, what is the use of increased military expenditure?

Within this context the EU, as one of the major global actors, has adopted a «civilian power» approach that calls upon it to act as «smart power» or a «normative power»<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> François Duchêne originally coined the «Civilian Power», for the EU though in 1973 Johan Galtung saw the EC as a «superpower in the making», an ideal peace system for its member states but an imperial power for the rest. The debate has raged on and off since and the following references are useful: Johan Galtung, *The European Community: A Superpower in the Making*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo and George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1973; Hedley Bull, «Civilian Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?», *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 21, n.° 2, 1982, pp. 149-164; Panayiotis Ifestos, *European Political Cooperation: Towards a Framework of Supranational Diplomacy?*, Avebury, 1987. More recently, Robert Kagan, «Power and Weakness», *Policy Review*, n.°113 (June and July 2002); Joseph S. Nye (1990), *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, Basic Books, New York 1990; «A Smarter Superpower», *Foreign Policy*, May-June 2007, pp. 46-47; Francis Fukuyama, «US Must Balance Hard Power With Soft Power», *New Perspectives Quarterly*, vol. 21, Issue 3, July 2004; Karen E. Smith, «The End of Civilian Power EU: A Welcome Demise or Cause of Concern?», *The International Spectator*, vol. 35, n.° 2, April-June 2000; Ian Manners, «Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?», *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 40, n.° 2, 2002, pp. 235-258; Hanns W. Maull, «European and the New Balance of Global Order», *International Affairs*, vol. 81, n.° 4, 2005, pp. 775-799; Stelios Stavridis, «Strengthen-

The EU's choice has been criticized as the only choice of a weak power and praised as the best approach in contemporary international relations. Without entering into the merits of this polemic here, it is quite clear that within the ambit of the «civilian power» approach Parliaments have a very important role to play: their consent is required to legitimize major foreign policy decisions and to garner the necessary domestic support for them, while their activism in international affairs makes them distinct actors in their own right. The opportunities for independent initiatives of parliaments and parliamentarians have increased in recent years. Of course, the effectiveness of the world's parliaments varies across the board. It is not our intention to survey the many parliamentary initiatives in the world and this chapter focuses on a special kind of «activism» namely trans-national, as opposed to sub-national, regional parliaments.

### *Other Positive Developments*

Starting in the early 1970s, the universalization of human rights as a principle for foreign policy, albeit consigned to the rhetorical level, confirmed the need to implement the post-WW2 United Nations Charter in practice. In the immediate and subsequent post-Cold War years, the promotion of human rights was strengthened further and following a number of cases of wholesale genocide (*e. g.* Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Burundi) a new role for International Justice was developed mainly by the establishment of the International

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ing the Continued Relevance of "Civilian Power Europe": the need to re-visit its democratic Scrutiny Dimension», *Hellenic Centre for European Studies (EKEM)*, paper 6, July 2006; Kalypso Nicolaidis, «The Power of the Superpowerless», in Tod Lindberg (ed.), *Beyond Paradise and Power: Europe, America, and the Future of a Troubled Partnership*, Routledge, 2005, pp. 93-120.

Criminal Court. In 2001, following a Canadian Government initiative, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty issued the famous report, *The Responsibility to Protect*, which argued in favour of intervention by the international community, including by military means, to stop the wholesale suppression of Human Rights particularly where genocide is concerned and where a government has manifestly failed to protect its own citizens <sup>11</sup>.

This again raised the issue of the limitations of sovereignty and proposed a right of intervention, on which there was no international concurrence given that it went against the most basic principle of classical international relations: that of sovereignty and non-intervention. It also raised another issue namely that of double standards.

This is where parliamentary bodies that transcend national borders have a role to play. In the past few decades their numbers have expanded enormously. Some assessments mention the figure of over 70 such institutions in the first years of the 21st century. Whether we are witnessing the beginning of a road towards a better, more moral, accountable and democratic World remains an open question. But the intentions are there, and so are the means. The underlying assumption here is not necessarily of a Fukuyama style of optimism, but it is also correct to argue that there is no alternative to democracy since other alternatives have failed to deliver —politically, socially and economically—. While not being a panacea, it remains a prerequisite, a necessary if not a sufficient condition for a better world system. This may not be universally accepted but it is a much more realistic and accurate perspective than

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<sup>11</sup> *The Responsibility to Protect, Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ottawa, December 2001.

those of any fundamentalists/extremists who literally offer nothing more than explosive and destructive combinations<sup>12</sup>.

It is within this context that it is usually assumed that «civilian power Europe» offers a model for an actor in a multilateral world, where the rule of law and the respect of human rights will prevail. The model is no doubt important generally speaking, i.e. as a model of integration; although not necessarily as a model for international relations. The 2009 Lisbon Treaty is meant to give the EU a better platform for playing its role as a «Civilian Power». But this also raises expectations (both within the EU and its member states and outside) about the EU's international behaviour: that it must pursue less *realpolitik* and more the pursuit of its values such as democracy and human rights<sup>13</sup>.

The question of consistency between rethoric and reality becomes an important issue and not just one of theoretical and «academic» importance.

In the case of the Mediterranean, without entering into a lot of detail, the European Union, its institutions (both the European Commission and the European Parliament) and several of its member states (especially the Mediterranean European ones, most recently France via the 2007 Sarkozy initiative) have been active international actors. Whether this can be explained via constructivist or more traditional realist theories, including Neoclassical Realism, is beyond the scope of this study<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> André Glucksmann, «La aterradora lógica de la bomba humana», *El País*, 04.05.10.

<sup>13</sup> Sonia Lucarelli and Lorenzo Fioramonti, *The External Perceptions of the European Union as a Global Actor*, Routledge, London, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Fulvio Attinà, «The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Assessed: The Realist and Liberal Views», *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 8, n.º 2, 2003, pp. 181-200; Stefano Costalli, «Power over the Sea:

What is important here is the empirical observation that the Mare Nostrum is consistently referred to as an area of EU priority.

## **PART 1. PARLIAMENTS AS INTERNATIONAL ACTORS**

### **A relatively new question**

Attention to the relative importance, role and impact of parliaments as international actors falls within the traditional International Relations debate between idealists and realists, incompatibilists and international democratic theorists, to name but a few. Empirically speaking, most attention has been given to the parliamentary input of the «democratic superpower»: the US Congress<sup>15</sup>.

Generally speaking, the parliamentarization of international affairs is a world-wide phenomenon that contains at least three important, interrelated, and in fact mutually-reinforcing, dimensions<sup>16</sup>:

- to control foreign policy widely defined at the parliamentary level (most current democracies are indirect democracies);
- to engage in «parliamentary diplomacy»;
- to act through established regional and other parliamentary bodies.

That is to say that the institutionalization of inter-parliamentary cooperation shows that the internation-

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The Relevance of Neoclassical Realism to Euro-Mediterranean Relations», *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 14, n.º 3, pp. 323-342.

<sup>15</sup> Lisa Martin, *Democratic Commitments - Legislatures and International Cooperation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> For details, see Andrés Malamud, Stelios Stavridis, «Parliaments and parliamentarians in regional international organizations», in Bob Reinalda (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Non-State Actors*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2011, pp. 101-115.

al relations of parliamentary bodies have developed much further than «just» traditional technical, financial and training cooperation; most of which are related to the consolidation of «the constitutional state, enhancing the proper functioning of democratic institutions through the improvement of the parliamentary work»<sup>17</sup>.

### **Proliferation of International Parliamentary Assemblies**

There is a global trend towards a gradual expansion and deepening of international parliamentary co-operation. One important way through which parliaments engage in regionalism is via the setting up of International Parliamentary Assemblies (IPAs), usually of a formal and highly institutionalised manner, based on written statutes and rules of procedures<sup>18</sup>. Three developments have been identified<sup>19</sup>.

- their expansion in the last sixty to seventy years;
- their expansion in terms of geographic spread of this type of organisation;

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<sup>17</sup> For details see: Technical Parliamentary Cooperation, French Senate: [www.senat.fr/international/english/coop.html](http://www.senat.fr/international/english/coop.html) (accessed 19.02.08). UN Division for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Technical Cooperation: [www.un.org/esa/sustdev/tech\\_coop/tech\\_coop.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/tech_coop/tech_coop.htm) (accessed 19.02.08).

<sup>18</sup> See Robert Cutler, «The OSCE's Parliamentary Diplomacy in Central Asia and the South Caucasus in Comparative Perspective», *Studia Diplomatica - Brussels Journal of International Relations*, vol. LIX, n.º 2, 2006, pp. 79-93; Zlatko Šabič, «Building Democratic and Responsible Global Governance: The Role of International Parliamentary Institutions», *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 61, n.º 2, 2008, pp. 255-271.

<sup>19</sup> Stefan Marschall, «European Parliaments in Transnational Organisations: Parliamentary Cooperation beyond the European Union», Paper prepared to the SWP Conference «Fifty Years of Interparliamentary Cooperation», 13 June 2007, Berlin.

- their affiliation to intergovernmental organisations (as a general rule)<sup>20</sup>.

Regional parliamentarization is expressed through the work of interparliamentary organs established within the framework of regional organisations. Parliamentary assemblies create a direct link between the national and the international decision-making levels. At the same time, linking parliaments to regionalism also brings in its impact on democratization. As Alex Warleigh argues, «[r]egional integration can be a force for (liberal) democratisation»<sup>21</sup>.

Though (inter)parliamentarization is by definition a formal, elite-driven process (i.e. engaging national or regional parliaments), its agenda reflects a new approach to regionalism: it does not merely involve cooperation among parliaments or parliamentary diplomacy, but it aims to strengthen other elements such as the involvement of civil society and non-state actors. It is multi-dimensional and comprehensive, as well as an open form of regionalism (known as «New Regionalism» or «Open Regionalism»)<sup>22</sup>.

It is important to note also that there are different «levels» of parliamentary input, just as there are various levels of governance, levels of governments in multi-level governance systems (especially clear in federal states and in «quasi»-federalized ones, c.f. Spain's autonomous communities). Thus, it is possible to argue

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<sup>20</sup> There are exceptions, long standing ones like PARLATINO (Latin American Parliament) or more recent ones like the PAM (Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean).

<sup>21</sup> Alex Warleigh, «In Defence of Intra-disciplinarity: "European Studies", the "New Regionalism", and the Issue of Democratisation», *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, July, vol. 17, n.º 2, pp. 301-318, 2004, p. 310.

<sup>22</sup> Björn Hettne, «The New Regionalism Revisited», in Söderbaum, Fedrik and Shaw, Timothy (eds.), *Theories of New Regionalism: A Palgrave Reader*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2003, pp. 22-42.

that there are sub-state, state, supranational and other regional and interregional levels of parliamentary input. In the case of the Mediterranean, this is a developing dimension, as much in terms of paradiplomacy as in terms of parliamentary paradiplomacy. For reasons of space, we do not address this issue here.

### **What «roles» do parliamentary bodies and parliamentarians actually perform in world politics?**

The main role for IPIs is to act as accountability and legitimization mechanisms for the regional integration process they are often related to. The literature on the subject remains rather limited to date. This is particularly relevant and appropriate for regional integration processes, or even inter-regional relations with a view to establishing Free-Trade Areas or other more sophisticated «Bi-regional Strategic Associations». For instance, as is often the case in several EU institutionalized agreements with other regions of the world, such as the one with African, Caribbean and Pacific States (EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly), or the more recent one with Latin America and the Caribbean (EUROLAT).

However a different literature, focusing more on parliamentary diplomacy as such has begun to focus on other functions that parliamentary bodies are performing more and more. There are at least four such functions<sup>23</sup>:

- (1) parliamentary bodies as «moral tribunes»;
- (2) parliamentary input in election monitoring;

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<sup>23</sup> Stelios Stavridis, «Parliamentary Diplomacy»: Some Preliminary Findings, *Jean Monnet Working Paper in Comparative & International Politics*, n.° 48, Università di Catania, November 2002, [www.fscpo.unict.it/euromed/cjmhome.htm](http://www.fscpo.unict.it/euromed/cjmhome.htm); Gabriel Eloriagga, *La diplomacia parlamentaria*, Imagine Ediciones, Madrid, 2004.



- (3) their role in the so-called «socialization effect»;
- (4) parliamentary diplomacy and conflict resolution (prevention, settlement).

It is often argued that parliaments act as «moral tribunes» on foreign policy issues. Because parliamentarians do not have to necessarily follow the official governmental line, they can be more «flexible» and even allow themselves the «luxury» of adopting a normative (*i. e.* moral) approach. As David Beetham has argued, parliamentarians do not necessarily «coincide with their respective country's official position on any given issue. This allows parliamentarians a margin of flexibility that is denied to the diplomat». He also claims that they «tend to bring a moral dimension to international politics that transcends narrow definitions of the national interest, particularly in their principled support for democracy and human rights»<sup>24</sup>. Others concur: «Realpolitik concerns are of less interest for the representatives of the European peoples sitting in the European Parliament»<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> David Beetham, *Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century: A Guide to Good Practice*, Interparliamentary Union, 2006: [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org), p. 11 (emphasis added).

<sup>25</sup> Flavia Zenon, «The European Parliament: an autonomous foreign policy identity?», in Barbé, Esther and Herranz, Anna (eds.), *The role of Parliaments in European foreign policy-Debating on accountability and legitimacy*, Office of the European Parliament in Barcelona, Barcelona, 2005, p. 118. For more details, see also Abdelwahab Biad, *¿Puede la institucionalización de una dimensión parlamentaria dinamizar el Partenariado Euromediterráneo?*, Med. 2005, IEMed/Instituto Europeo del Mediterráneo and CIDOB, Barcelona, 2005, pp. 110-113: [www.cidob.org](http://www.cidob.org); Roderick Pace, Stelios Stavridis, 2010, «The EMPA, 2004-2008: Assessing the first four years of the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process», *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Spring 2010, vol. 21, n.º 2, pp. 90-113. A large number of parliamentarians have repeatedly made this point on the international role of parliaments to one of the authors of this piece in a series of interviews over several years: Stelios Stavridis, «The Parliamentary Forum of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: an assessment», *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 7, n.º 2, Summer 2002, pp. 30-53; «The

There are however also signs that this may not always be the case. When important national interests are at stake, many parliamentarians, especially within the government's ranks, often tend to close ranks with their Executive. As foreign policy issues are very often bipartisan in their nature any such stance may limit the moral or moralistic view that is often displayed in general parliamentary gatherings. Recent analyses of the EP stance on Cyprus and Turkey point to a strong dose of Realpolitik, often at the expense of morality but also international legal standards<sup>26</sup>. The same can be said about the way the EP dealt with the Sarkozy Initiative. Instead of displaying clear signs of Europeanization, most MEPs reacted in defence of their established national interests<sup>27</sup>.

Electoral monitoring is often regarded as an important element in democratisation, especially for non-democratic countries. The participation of parliamentarians in election monitoring does not only follow logically from their belonging to a parliament. It also

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international relations of the Cypriot Parliament», *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, vol. 5, n.º 3, December 2003, pp. 337-354; «The European Parliament and the Cyprus Problem: a preliminary—and critical—assessment», *Institute of International Economic Relations Working Paper*, n.º 24, Athens, July 2006: [www.idec.gr/iier](http://www.idec.gr/iier); Towards a «European solution» of the Cyprus Problem? assessing the views of some (Greek-)Cypriots MEPs, Fundación Seminario de Investigación para la Paz, Zaragoza, 22.05.06, 2006: [www.seipaz.org](http://www.seipaz.org).

<sup>26</sup> See Stelios Stavridis, Charalambos Tsardanidis, «The Cyprus Problem in the European Parliament: a case of successful or superficial Europeanisation?», *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 14, n.º 1, February 2009, pp. 129-156. On the Western Sahara issue, see Jordi Vaquer i Fanés, «The European Union and Western Sahara», *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 9, n.º 1, 2004, pp. 93-113.

<sup>27</sup> Stelios Stavridis, George Tzogopoulos, «The European Parliament and the Debate over Sarkozy's Mediterranean Initiative: A Preliminary Assessment», *Études Hélieniques/Hellenic Studies (Special Issue on «Union for the Mediterranean: National and Regional Perspectives»*; Guest editors: Dimitris Xenakis and Panayotis Tsakonas), vol. 17, n.º 2, Autumn 2009, pp. 239-260.

shows that they have an important international role to play. In the EMPA, it has been argued that there is a need for «the strengthening of democratic processes in all the partner countries, *particularly the sound organisation of elections*»<sup>28</sup>. Many a national parliamentarian has been involved in election monitoring throughout the world. The European Parliament has been involved in numerous election monitoring missions over the years<sup>29</sup>.

In the existing literature, the «socialization effect» is usually referred to a process that has taken place (or is taking place when analyzed from a «process» perspective) in situations where parliamentarians from democratic countries mix with their counterparts from undemocratic or partly democratic ones. Such institutional frameworks are supposed to socialize the non-democratic members over time in democratic practices.

This is at least the theory. In practice many problematic questions remain unresolved: one of them is the question of time. How much time is given to that process? How does one evaluate its impact? Whatever the limitations, most parliamentarians accept that on the whole this is a process worth investing time and effort in. One of the reasons being the alternative: not to engage at all.

Of course, there are also other mitigating circumstances: for instance, the counterparts to EP interpar-

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<sup>28</sup> Point 44, «Resolution of the EMPA on the assessment of the Barcelona Process on the eve of its tenth anniversary, adopted on 15 March 2005 in Cairo (Egypt) on the basis of the resolution tabled by Mrs Tokia Saïfi, Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee on Political, Security and Human Rights Issues», First Session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, Cairo, March 2005, p. 64 (emphasis added).

<sup>29</sup> 32 such missions during the 1994-1999 term; 37 during the 1999-2004; and no less than 59 during the 2004-2009 term. There is a webpage on the EP website dedicated to what is called Election Observation, not to ruffle sensitivities: [www.europarl.europa.eu/int-coop/election\\_observation/implementing\\_provisions\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/int-coop/election_observation/implementing_provisions_en.pdf).

liamentary assemblies cannot be just representatives of their respective regimes (usually appointed diplomats), as was the case in the past<sup>30</sup>. There is no need to say that those regimes have invented ways of circumventing this hurdle, but it is yet another additional obstacle that they still need to overcome. The question remains whether non-democratic regimes parliamentary representatives act indeed as parliamentarians or whether they only represent the parliamentary arms of governing elites. In short are they, for want of a better term, diplomats disguised as MPs?

As for conflict, to quote again Beetham, «[t]he cessation of regional conflict is the first imperative for regional parliamentary dialogue»<sup>31</sup>. In the words of the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania, Anne Makinda:

«Parliaments should also be seen increasingly as forums that can assist in peace-building and conflict resolution in those LDC countries that are either at risk of or are emerging from conflict»<sup>32</sup>.

For instance, Alain Berset of Switzerland's Council of States (*i. e.* Senate) reminds us that «the first contact between the British and the Argentinians after the Falklands War took place within the Inter-Parliamentary Union», adding further that a «meeting between North

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<sup>30</sup> French Green MEP Alima Boumédiène interview, in Stelios Stavridis, «The Parliamentary Forum of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: an assessment», *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 7, n.° 2, Summer 2002, pp. 47-48.

<sup>31</sup> David Beetham, *Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century: A Guide to Good Practice*, Interparliamentary Union, 2006: [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org), p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Statement by the Honourable Anne S. Makinda, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the mid-term review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, United Nations, New York, 18 September 2006.

and South Korean parliamentary representatives [also took place) within the framework of this same organisation, which also set up a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian parliamentary representatives (...)»<sup>33</sup>.

Although sometimes traditional diplomats consider parliamentarians as «interfering in» their own work<sup>34</sup>, this is a rather old-fashioned approach that does not necessarily reflect the reality of international relations in the 21st century. It goes without saying that it is also possible for parliamentarians to «respecter un devoir de réserve», to use the words of Xavier de Villepin, then President of the French Senate's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armies Committee<sup>35</sup>. It is often the case that members of Foreign Affairs or Defence and Security Committees are allowed to view «secret» documents as long as they do not divulge their content. A similar example exists with the Committee of Five in the European Parliament. Although there is always the risk of «co-opting» parliamentarians into a culture of secrecy, but possible risks should not outweigh any real benefits<sup>36</sup>.

## PART 2. PARLIAMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Sadly, the Mediterranean region is almost synonymous with «conflicts»<sup>37</sup>. Therefore, it would appear that

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<sup>33</sup> Proceedings of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments in Tallinn (Estonia) on 30-31 May 2006, p. 48.

<sup>34</sup> «Un parasitage dans les négociations» to use the words of Gérard Davet and Pascal Ceaux, «Le cas Julia», *Le Monde*, 09.03.05: [www.lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr).

<sup>35</sup> Sénat, *La diplomatie parlementaire*, Actes du Colloque, French Senate, Paris, 2001: [www.senat.fr](http://www.senat.fr) (accessed 17.08.05), p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> C. Castairs, R. Ware (eds.), *Parliament and international affairs*, OUP, Oxford, 1991.

<sup>37</sup> See Paul Balta, «La Méditerranée en tant que zone de conflits», *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, vol. 37, 1997, pp. 9-18.

conflict resolution represents an «ideal» case for assessing the impact of parliamentary diplomacy, especially within the deeply institutionalised context of the EMPA. In the various EMPA documents to date it is also clear that conflict resolution is considered to be one of the key roles for the Assembly. To list but one such example: the EMPA President (March 2009-March 2010), the Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament, Mr. Abdul-Hadi Al Majali, made it quite clear in his inaugural speech as President, that «we must focus on the Middle East peace process, because without a just and lasting peace in our region, all these goals will be difficult to achieve» (r. e. the goals as defined by the UfM agenda)<sup>38</sup>.

Other parliamentary bodies take the same stance on the need to find a solution to the Middle East Conflict. The «other» Mediterranean Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean<sup>9</sup> has repeatedly stated so. During its November 2008 Plenary in Monaco, Maltese MP George Vella acted as Rapporteur for a PAM report on the Middle East which reiterated similar points. In February 2010, the PAM organized with the United Nations in Malta an International Meeting in support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace. During the event a message sent by UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon was read to all participants. Malta's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tonio Borg (as the representative of the host country), said that parliamentarians had a role to play in supporting peace and stability through this kind of meetings that go beyond traditional diplomatic means. Former Jordanian MP and PAM Vice-President Suleiman Ghneimat expressed a similar view: «parliamentarians in the

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<sup>38</sup> Remarks by H. E. Mr. Abdul-Hadi Al Majali at the 5th Plenary session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly as the New President (15-17 March 2009, Brussels): [www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/plenary\\_sessions/plenary\\_session\\_032009/speech\\_abdulhadi\\_majali.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/plenary_sessions/plenary_session_032009/speech_abdulhadi_majali.pdf).

Mediterranean —representing more than 500 million people— (...) could play a basic role in the promotion of conventional diplomacy in search of permanent and just solutions to these issues that influenced their region»<sup>39</sup>.

Now that we have clearly established that both practitioners and academics agree that conflict resolution should be a key priority for parliamentary assemblies and parliamentary diplomacy, we turn to three specific case-studies. Before doing that, we will outline the reasons why all three conflicts are important for Euro-Mediterranean relations at all levels. Although it is important to note that what follows is not an analysis of conflict case-studies. It will focus instead on how and why those specific conflicts are preventing progress in the EMP/UfM. But before we come to that point it is important to focus a little more on the EMPA itself.

## **The EMPA**

The EMPA's power have so far been limited to making recommendations but the European Parliament has tried to turn it into the parliamentary arm of the UfM wherein it would have an important say in the decisions taken. In June 2008, the EP approved a resolution in which it welcomed an EU Commission proposal calling for the EMPA to become an integral part of the institutional framework of the «Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean» (BP-UfM), as its parliamentary dimension. The Parliament insisted that the enhancement of democratic legitimacy is necessary, as is the strength-

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<sup>39</sup> International UN-Pam meeting in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace - Highlights of the Proceedings, Prepared by the Department of Public Information of the UN, 12-13 February 2010, Qawra, Malta: [www.apm.org.mt/documents/pdfs/PAM%20UN%20INFO%20W%20COVER%2014022010.pdf](http://www.apm.org.mt/documents/pdfs/PAM%20UN%20INFO%20W%20COVER%2014022010.pdf).

ening of the role of the EMPA, the only parliamentary assembly uniting the 27 EU Member States and all the parties involved in the Middle East peace process. The EP also stated that it considers that the EMPA, as a consultative body, should have the right to make proposals and assessments<sup>40</sup>.

However, at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean which was held the following month, the EU and Mediterranean leaders dashed any hope of giving the Assembly the powers it was seeking, conceding only that «The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly will be the legitimate parliamentary expression of the BP-UfM. Heads of State and Government strongly support the strengthening of the role of the EMPA in its relations with Mediterranean partners»<sup>41</sup>.

In reaction to this setback, on the 12 October 2008, at a meeting in Jordan, the EMPA made another effort to convince the member states of the BP-UfM into strengthening its powers. This was done in a «Recommendation» addressed to the then forthcoming Mediterranean ministerial meeting in Marseilles<sup>42</sup>.

In this «Recommendation», EMPA stated that, as a follow-up to the Paris Joint Declaration of 13 July 2008, the ministers should formally declare the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly to be an integral part of the «Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediter-

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<sup>40</sup> Point 15 in European Parliament resolution of 5 June 2008 on the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (P6\_TA(2008)0257).

<sup>41</sup> Point 17 of the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, Paris, 13 July 2008.

<sup>42</sup> *Recommendation from the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly to the first meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean* (Marseille, 3-4 November 2008) on the role of the Euro Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly within the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean.



anean», as its parliamentary institution. The recommendation also called for a legal basis to be created and a formal link established between the executive branch and the parliamentary branch of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean, further stressing that such a legal basis should include the practical details of this link. It was stressed that these details should provide for decisions on mutual representation at respective meetings and the need to take due account of each institution's work in drafting agendas, etc., which, in any case, should safeguard the independence of the partnership's institutions. As far as financing and the necessary organizational set up were concerned, the EMPA recommendation stressed that the future competences of the various institutions were to be respected. Had EMPA's demands been met, the parliamentary dimension of the BP-UfM would have advanced a substantial way.

However, a number of objectives that EMPA should pursue and which were included in the «recommendation» may have alarmed the governments of the southern Mediterranean states into resisting these demands. For, in the recommendation the EMPA stated in no uncertain terms that in its role as a consultative body, it would:

- promote democratic processes and human rights through cultural and political dialogue and consultation;
- facilitate greater understanding between the peoples of the European Union and those of the Mediterranean partner states; raise public awareness of cooperation necessities;
- discuss issues pertaining to the BP-UfM;
- hold to account the institutional structure of the BP-UfM;
- adopt resolutions and make recommendations to the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Minis-

ters with a view of achieving the objectives of the BP-UfM<sup>43</sup>.

At their November 2008 meeting, the ministers ended all hope that the EMPA could be developed as the parliamentary dimension of the UfM in the foreseeable future to the extent to which the EP and EMPA were pushing for. The ministers simply stated that they believed «that the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) reinforces the democratic legitimacy of the Partnership. They duly take note of the EMPA recommendation adopted in Jordan on the 13th October 2008. The BP-UfM requires a strong parliamentary dimension. Therefore the Ministers underline that the position of the EMPA should be further consolidated and its work better articulated with the other institutions of the Partnership». At the same time, and in what surely must be considered as another snub of the Mediterranean parliamentarians, they went on to «stress the need to promote the implementation of concrete action at local and regional level. In this respect, they commend the Forum of Local and Regional Authorities that was held on 22 and 23 June 2008 in Marseille. They also duly take note of the Committee of Regions' opinion issued on 9 October 2008 and the proposal to create a Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly. The Assembly's members would represent EU local and regional elected officials and elected officials from Mediterranean partner countries equally, similar to parliamentary representation in the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly»<sup>44</sup>.

Not only were the powers of the EMPA in the UfM not strengthened by the ministers, but EMPA's role and

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean, Ministerial Conference, Marseille, 3-4 November 2008, Final declaration, Council of the European Union, Press Statement 15187/08 (Presse 314).

influence was further threatened by a new accent and encouragement which was placed on a rival assembly of representatives, the newly emerged Mediterranean Regional Assembly (2010).

Most of the fears regarding the emergence of a strong parliamentary dimension of the UfM came from the Southern Mediterranean states. One diplomat from one of these countries, who does not wish to be named, expressed it in rather «sovereignty terms» claiming that his government could not be held accountable by a parliamentary assembly other than its own national parliament. Of course most of the governments of the Southern Mediterranean states are hardly held accountable by their national parliaments, given the realities of their political systems, often referred to as «façade democracies». Southern Mediterranean political elites are very sensitive to criticism by democratic parliamentary assemblies and they have frequently reacted extremely negatively to criticism by the European Parliament. In January 2008, the Egyptian Foreign Minister called in the EU Ambassadors in Cairo to protest against an EP draft resolution which criticized his country's human rights record<sup>45</sup>.

According to reports in the media, quoting Cairo's foreign ministry spokesman Hossam Zaki, Egypt was not going to accept any attempt by any country to comment on the human rights situation in Egypt, as it will not allow itself to lecture other countries over their domestic affairs<sup>46</sup>.

Following the Marseille setback, the European Parliament had no alternative but to declare a truce, leav-

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<sup>45</sup> European Parliament resolution of 17 January 2008 on the situation in Egypt (P6\_TA(2008)0023).

<sup>46</sup> EU Business: <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1200574021.32/?searchterm=None> (accessed 20.03.2010), report filed on 17 January 2010.

ing the possibility open for further developments in the future. On the 19 February 2009, it approved a resolution in which it stated that it:

«Welcomes the decision of the Ministerial Conference of 3 November 2008, which duly took note of the recommendation adopted by the EMPA in Jordan on 13 October 2008; supports the decision to bring a strong parliamentary dimension to the Union for the Mediterranean, thereby reinforcing its democratic legitimacy, by building on the EMPA, which should be further consolidated and its work better articulated with that of the other institutions of the Partnership, with the possibility being envisaged of granting it legal personality and entitling it to propose and assess economic and regional integration strategies and projects and allowing it to make recommendations to the meetings of foreign affairs ministers; expects this recognition of the EMPA as an institution also to be reflected by its participating as an observer at all meetings of the executive, at meetings of the Heads of State and Government, at ministerial meetings and at the preparatory meetings of senior officials»<sup>47</sup>.

Reviewing these events in his closing speech at the fifth ordinary plenary session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) held in Brussels, 17 March 2009, Hans-Gert Pöttering, president of the EP/EMPA said: «Today, however, we must acknowledge that the process of integrating the EMPA into the Union for the Mediterranean as its parliamentary institution is not yet complete... One day —I am convinced— the EMPA will be the “parliament” of the Union for the Mediterranean».

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<sup>47</sup> European Parliament resolution of 19 February 2009 on the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (2008/2231(INI)) P6\_TA(2009)0077.

## 1. THE THREE CONFLICTS UNDER STUDY

### *The Middle East*

The situation in the Middle East leads to general instability in its immediate vicinity, while its shock waves reverberate throughout the Mediterranean region. Indeed, over the past decades, the Arab-Israeli conflict has led to a destabilizing arms race in the Middle East affecting all the states of the region. This is slowly transforming itself into one involving weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). It provides Arab governments with the excuse to delay or oppose democratic reforms. It leads to periodic wasteful flare-ups that create disruption of human and economic life in the states involved. In this respect one only has to mention the Intifadas, the 2006 war in Lebanon, the January 2009 Israeli attacks on Gaza, and the Israel air raids on Gaza in April 2010. Such flare-ups also have a negative effect on the very volatile price of oil. Some argue that the Middle East conflict —along with the American occupation of Iraq— continue to provide grist to the terrorist mill. This is a rather facile argument because it would be wrong to conclude that these are the sole root causes of the terrorist phenomenon. The shadow of the conflict hangs over the Mediterranean. It is one of the many, though not the only, important factors that negatively affect economic growth in the Arab areas affected by war (Israel, Palestinian Territories, Iraq) and undercuts neighbouring states<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Sufyan Alissa lists a number of factors retarding reform in the Arab world apart from the conflict in «The Challenge of Economic Reform in the Arab World: Toward more Productive Economies», *Carnegie Middle East Center, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, n.º 1, May 7, 2007; but the authors of the Arab Human Development Report 2009, UNDP chapter 8, page 165 forward have placed a greater emphasis on the economic effects of conflict on economic growth.

A solution will stop the regional arms race, and unblock possibly the way to long-awaited reforms in the Arab world. Significantly, on 9 May 2010, coincidentally the day when the Schuman Declaration is commemorated in Europe, indirect talks between Israel and the Palestinians began through US mediation thus ending 17 months of stalemate.

### *Cyprus*

The Cyprus Problem continues to trouble relations between the EU/European Union and Turkey, also impinging on NATO's cohesion. The Cyprus Problem has often led to confrontations between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean.

In a seminar on the Cyprus Problem organized in 2004 by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Lt. Col. Peter Najera, Country Director for Greece and Cyprus, Office of the US Secretary of Defence, was reported to have said:

«In military circles the Cyprus problem is seen as the last major source of tension in the Aegean. A settlement in Cyprus will open the floodgates for cooperation among the nations of the region in NATO, the United Nations, and the U.S.-led global war on terrorism»<sup>49</sup>.

On 7 November 2008, the International press reported that Turkey had rejected a set of proposals by the EU to unblock planned co-operation of Cyprus with NATO. The EU tried to find a solution to a long-lasting row with Turkey over Cyprus's participation in NATO-led operations, but Ankara did not accept any of Brussels' proposals (according to Gerard Araud, political director of the French Foreign Ministry, whose country

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<sup>49</sup> [www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event\\_summary&event\\_id=115388](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event_summary&event_id=115388) (accessed 27.12.2008).

held at that time the EU rotating Presidency). Turkey objects to the participation of Cyprus in NATO operations, as this would mean recognising the Republic of Cyprus. This has made EU-NATO co-operation under the so called «Berlin Plus» arrangement difficult if not impossible.

On Turkey's EU prospects, although it is true that the debate has shifted as far as Cyprus is concerned over the question of opening up a few ports and airports (and not about the illegal invasion, occupation and colonization of the north of the Island). And, several accession negotiations chapters have been blocked since the end of 2006 (eight of them, with another five by France over the question of membership or privileged partnership)<sup>50</sup>.

A solution to the Cyprus Problem (another case of justice delayed) will benefit all the people in that island, remove a cause of internal turbulence from within the EU and NATO, and finally it might bring Turkey closer to its own accession ambitions<sup>51</sup>.

### *The Western Sahara*

The Western Sahara produces turbulence in the Maghreb, and negatively affects integration prospects in that sub-region, which is a goal very much desired

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<sup>50</sup> See Stelios Stavridis, *La Unión Europea y el conflicto chipriota (1974-2006)*, Editorial Icaria, Barcelona, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> We say «possibly» because there are plenty of other obstacles to Turkey's road to EU membership, see Aylin Güney, «The Politics of Turkey's Accession Process to the European Union», in Stavridis, Stelios (ed.), *Understanding and Evaluating the European Union: theoretical and empirical approaches*, Nicosia University Press, Nicosia, 2009, pp. 269-291. On the question of a «case of justice delayed», see inter alia Costas Melakopides, «Reasons for Europe's Legal and Moral Duty to Honour its Own Principles and Values in the Republic of Cyprus», in *ibid.*, pp. 331-356.

by the EU<sup>52</sup>. For example, the Western Sahara issue has stifled economic integration in the Maghreb, notwithstanding that the economic welfare gains that would accrue to all the participating states are such as to make the case for establishing the union a seemingly full proof one. The UMA (Arab Maghreb Union) is the most obvious victim of such a situation, with no border crossing allowed between Algeria and Morocco<sup>53</sup>. Every time there is a crisis over relations between Spain and Morocco (like the 2000 Parsley Island incident)<sup>54</sup>, the Western Sahara is regularly brought to the fore of international limelight.

## 2. THE EMPA AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

### 2.1. The EMPA and conflicts

#### *The EMPA*

International inter-parliamentary cooperation in the Mediterranean has a long history, starting with the International Parliamentary Union (IPU)<sup>55</sup>. Euro-Med-

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<sup>52</sup> Jordi Vaquer i Fanés, «The European Union and Western Sahara», *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 9, n.º 1, 2004, pp. 93-113; «España y el Sáhara Occidental: la dimensión partidista», *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, n.ºs 79-80, December 2007, pp. 125-144; Novais Rui, «The ENP and the Saharawi conflict resolution: doomed to failure?», in André Barrinha (ed), *Towards a Global Dimension: EU's Conflict Management in the Neighbourhood and Beyond*, Fundação Friedrich Ebert, Lisbon, 2008, pp. 85-98.

<sup>53</sup> See Yahia Zoubir, «Stalemate in Western Sahara: Ending International Legality», *Middle East Policy*, vol. XIV, n.º 4, Winter 2007, pp. 158-177.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Gillespie, «“This Stupid Little Island”: A Neighbourhood Confrontation in the Western Mediterranean», *International Politics*, vol. 43, n.º 1, 2006, pp. 110-132.

<sup>55</sup> The IPU's website is: [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org).



iterranean parliamentary cooperation as such has developed within the 1995 Barcelona Process, initially as the EMP Parliamentary Forum (1998-2003), and from 2004 onwards as the EMPA<sup>56</sup>. There are of course other parliamentary bodies involved in the Mediterranean region: Not only the national parliaments themselves or the EP, but also the PAs of the CoE, the OSCE, NATO, the WEU and an Arab initiative, the Arab Parliamentary Union which is crucial to the Euro-Arab Parliamentary Dialogue started in 1974.

### *Conflicts*

In its initial phase, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly did not prioritize any of the major regional conflicts. This does not mean of course that they were not discussed at various levels within the EMPA itself. For instance, the EMPA November 2005 Rabat Extraordinary Session and the 2006 Annual Plenary in Brussels dealt mostly with the Middle East<sup>57</sup>. Nor that these conflicts do not exercise any influence on the internal workings of the Assembly, or that they are utterly side-tracked. In fact, it could be argued that the

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<sup>56</sup> The EMPA's website is: [www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/default.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/default.htm). Abdelwahab Biad, «Los parlamentos como nuevos actores del partenariado: hacia una diplomacia parlamentaria en el Mediterráneo», *Àgora-Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, n.º 8, 2003, pp. 11-19; Cristina Retta, «La política euromediterránea: su dimensión parlamentaria en el proceso de Barcelona», *Àgora-Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, n.º 9, 2003, pp. 37-51; Ioannis Seimenis, Miltiadis Makriyannis, «Reinvigorating the Parliamentary Dimension of the Barcelona Process: The Establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly», *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Spring, 2005, pp. 85-105.

<sup>57</sup> EMPA, «Declaration of the Presidency Addressed to the Tenth Anniversary Euro-Mediterranean Summit», Rabat, 21 November 2005; EMPA 2nd Plenary Session Presidency Final Declaration, Brussels, 27 March 2006. The same is true of subsequent Declarations.

EMPA has been «contaminated» by them as much as the EMP or the UfM. It is also true that initial «hopes» that the then newly-founded EMP would not be affected by any problems in the Middle East Peace Process (the peace process was quite upbeat in between 1993-1996, i.e. at the time of the EMP launch) turned out simply to be utopian dreams.

It should also be noted that when situations of tension flare up into hot conflict, as happened in the case of the 2006 Israeli-Lebanon war or more recently with the January 2009 Israeli attack on Gaza, the EMPA did try to exercise some sort of a mediating role. Nowadays, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a dominant subject for all Euro-Mediterranean relations and those include its parliamentary dimension. Hence, while initially the conflict seemed to have been given the back seat, now it has become a regular item on the agenda. As a result, it is now asphyxiating any form of debate and undermining the very role of parliamentary diplomacy particularly when events in the Middle East lead to some Partner or a group of them deserting the proceedings as happened when Syria and Lebanon (who did not attend the Valencia Foreign Ministers' meeting in 2002), and, more recently, the stalemate created in 2008 in the UfM on the issue of the participation of the Arab League and subsequent developments following EP criticism of Egypt's human rights' record (see above). The third criticism would be that the other two conflicts apart from the Middle East, those of Cyprus and the Western Sahara, have been side-stepped from the parliamentary agenda from the start, a situation which persists until now. In the next section we review in more detail these three conflicts and how they impact on the parliamentary diplomacy of the EMPA.

## 2.2. The Middle East

Clearly, it would be a pity —and a great opportunity lost— for the Assembly to be bogged down by a discussion of the Middle East Conflict. But then it is odd that a Parliamentary Assembly intended to strengthen North-South bonds in the Mediterranean should engage in «small talk» at the expense of the more serious discussion of the real threats to peace and stability in the region. The treatment of the Middle East problem within the EMPA may bear an acute resemblance with a case of trying to «run with the hare and hunt with the hounds». If the issue is prioritised it paralyses all other work in the Assembly; if it is side-tracked, the Assembly is justly criticised as a sham.

Hence, for example, in the priorities which the Hellenic Parliament had set itself for the duration of its March 2007-March 2008 tenure of the EMPA Presidency, the Middle East problem was only placed in seventh place, after other topics such as «the dialogue between cultures», environmental and climate protection, energy and migration. This was not a case of misplaced priorities. It reflected the prevalent mood in the assembly. Indeed, the Hellenic EMPA Presidency proposed as the first point of discussion in the Political Affairs Committee «Ways for the Parliaments to contribute to the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict»<sup>58</sup>.

The fact that the Middle East Conflict featured so low in the list of priorities may be a sign that the EMPA sees it as having a disruptive impact on a broader dialogue on a number of other important issues. A working group on peace and security in the Middle East was established in March 2007 which by July had gained rec-

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<sup>58</sup> See «Items of the Committees» on the Greek Presidency website: <http://empa.parliament.gr/> (accessed 12.10.07).

ognition within the EMPA as a parliamentary approach to help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. By the March 2008 Athens EMPA meeting the group was already steadily on its feet.

When the European Parliament assumed the Presidency of the Assembly in March 2008, it put the Middle East process at the top of its priorities stating:

«1. [The] Peace process in the Middle East: the EMPA should contribute to political dialogue in the region, to enhance the implementation of the road map and international law. The Bureau could become directly involved by organizing regular exchanges of views with Speakers of the Parliaments of the parties at stake and with other relevant actors (The Quartet, the Quartet's representative, SG of the League of Arab States, etc.). On a case by case basis, these meetings could be opened to all Committee chairs and to rapporteurs should a topic of interest for their work be addressed».

At the extraordinary EMPA plenary which met in Jordan in October 2008, work was divided almost equally between a discussion of the EMPA as the parliamentary dimension of the «Union for the Mediterranean» and the Middle East Conflict; and at the Brussels plenary of March 2009 a recommendation tabled by the Political Affairs Committee and approved by the Assembly focused exclusively on the Middle East Conflict and the situation in Gaza at the time when there was stalemate in the Peace Process. Hence, it can be concluded that from 2007 onwards the EMPA began to focus more on the Arab-Israeli conflict and to give it more open and official centre stage. This shift in emphasis also happened at a time when the United States was pursuing the Annapolis Initiative, which introduced an element of «competitive interest» in the formula: the EMPA wanted to avoid all possible criticism that the Mediterranean's most august parliamentary institution was standing helplessly by while Washington ran the «Middle East show». But when the conflict in Gaza suddenly erupted towards the end of

2008, both the work of the EMPA and the UfM, which had been officially launched that year (Paris Summit and the Marseilles Ministerial) were disrupted and the EMPA only just managed to issue a statement on Gaza and to hold an ordinary meeting session in Brussels on the 29 January 2009 which decided to send a high level fact finding mission to Israel and Gaza. The disruption was caused by the decision of the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Islamic Conference, acting on behalf of the Arab Group in the EMPA, to suspend its involvement in the EMPA. The EMPA committees were able to resume their work in mid-February 2009<sup>59</sup>.

But the impasse in the UfM persisted beyond that date. Here the Arab member states—with Egypt as the co-Chair—asked for a suspension of the UfM institutions and various ministerial meetings including the crucial one involving the Union's foreign ministers were suspended several times. At the start of March 2010, the UfM Secretariat was officially inaugurated in Barcelona with Jordanian Ahmad Masadeh appointed as secretary general. The Spanish EU Presidency planned to organize an UfM summit on 7 June 2010 in Barcelona, which, due to a number of issues, and in particular the presence of Israeli foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman, was postponed to November, and eventually canceled.

Notwithstanding that the Middle East conflict has gradually worked its way up the ladder from one of a number of issues to the forefront of the EMPA agenda, the discussion of the conflict has paradoxically monopolized most of the debate throughout the lifetime of the EMPA and has obstructed progress on many issues discussed in the various committees, at times even threatening the very functioning of the EMPA itself.

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<sup>59</sup> Closing speech by the President of the EP/EMPA, Hans-Gert Pottering at the fifth ordinary plenary session of the EMPA held in Brussels in March 2009.

Paradoxically, while under the EP presidency of Hans-Gert Pottering, the EMPA had prioritized the Middle East conflict, under the Jordanian Presidency which began in March 2010 and which will last until March 2011, the pendulum seems to have shifted away from the Middle East Conflict; and the last recommendation of the Political Committee approved at the March 2010 EMPA plenary in Jordan referred to the role of the UfM in the Mediterranean region and freedom of expression, of religion and belief. This is quite earth-shattering considering that at the time when the plenary was taking place, the impasse in the peace process, Israeli policy to allow new settlements in East Jerusalem and excavations around the Temple Mount had strengthened speculation that yet another Palestinian Intifada was on the verge of exploding.

### 2.3. Cyprus

On the contrary, the long standing Cyprus Problem remains totally side-lined in the EMPA, notwithstanding that it was mentioned in the 2004 Athens Plenary Declaration. There is no reference whatsoever to that particular conflict in any of the Final Declarations or other major EMPA documents since.

In the report on the activities of the third EMPA Committee presented in Cairo in 2005, it is written that the Turkish delegation had «asked for the deletion» of a reference to Cyprus «as there was no need to discuss this issue in the session»<sup>60</sup>.

In the record of the Proceedings it is stated that:

«The Cypriot Representative wondered why Turkey had asked to delete the paragraph on Cyprus, pointing

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<sup>60</sup> First session of the EMPA/Première session de l'APEM, Cairo, March 2005, p. 33.

out that a large part of his country is occupied by Turkey. He asked for keeping that paragraph which called for the respect and promotion of human rights in Cyprus»<sup>61</sup>.

This situation is not new and reflects a long-standing effort by the Turkish parliamentary delegation to deflect any potential criticism of its continued occupation within the EMPA framework. In fact, as early as the initial parliamentarisation of EU-Mediterranean relations, known as the Parliamentary Forum, a similar incident had taken place when an addendum by the Cypriot delegation complaining that the Forum Final Declaration does not refer to the Cyprus Problem because of «the objection of the Turkish delegation (...) despite repeated calls by several members»<sup>62</sup>.

There was no reference to Cyprus in the 2005 Cairo Final Declaration but in a Resolution tabled by the Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Security «On the Assessment of the Barcelona Process on the Eve of its Tenth Anniversary», the EMPA instructed the said committee to monitor —among other things— «other political problems pertaining to security and neighbourhood between partner countries, *including the Cyprus issue*»<sup>63</sup>.

The fact that there was no direct reference to the issue but just a mention as one of the many problems in the Mediterranean confirms this lack of attention to the Cyprus Problem. What is also pertinent to point out is that the EMPA despite its vast number of parliamentarians —then 260, now 280 in all— finds it difficult to attend to other conflicts other than the Arab-Israeli one such as those in Cyprus and the Western Sahara.

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>62</sup> Stavridis, «The Parliamentary Forum of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: an assessment», *Mediterranean Politics*, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>63</sup> First session of the EMPA/Première session de l'APEM (2005), *op. cit.*, p. 64 (emphasis added).

The only reference to the Cyprus conflict during the 2004 Inaugural Plenary Session in Athens needs also to be contextualized. It happened during the weeks prior to the 24 April 2004 double referendum on the Annan Plan in Cyprus, and prior to the Republic of Cyprus' accession to the EU on 1 May 2004. The expectation then was that there would be a solution to the Cyprus Problem and that a reunified Island would join the Union. No doubt, there was a lot of «wishful thinking» in what was called the «catalytic impact of membership». Most of it was not related to the intricacies of the Annan Plan itself. As there was no debate on the issue in the European Parliament, there was no debate in the EMPA Plenary either. To say the least, one can express astonishment at not seeing any debate over such an issue, especially among parliamentarians<sup>64</sup>.

Such an attitude towards the Cyprus Problem is strange, to put it mildly, because Cyprus is a member of the EU, part of its territory is illegally occupied by a candidate state to EU membership and a fully-fledged participant in the EMPA, and the reverberations from the conflict periodically produce important problems within the EU itself.

Finally, beyond the scope of the current study, one cannot but ask the question of whether it is so because Cyprus is «small meat» when compared to the more ominous challenges the Union faces? But one should be careful that even «smaller» problems (and their lack of a solution) can develop into bigger ones, especially for a Union that claims to be an international actor.

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<sup>64</sup> For more, see Stavridis, *La Unión Europea y el conflicto chipriota (1974-2006)*, *op. cit.*, 119-146; Stavridis, Tsardanidis, «The Cyprus Problem in the European Parliament: a case of successful or superficial Europeanisation?», *European Foreign Affairs Review*, *op. cit.*, 2009.



## 2.4. The Western Sahara

At the first session of the EMPA held in Cairo in 2005, a resolution was approved that referred comprehensively to the issues involved in the process and instructed its Political Committee to monitor the situation in the Middle East and in Cyprus, but the Western Sahara problem was side-stepped never to feature again<sup>65</sup>. The exclusion of this conflict, which has bedevilled the politics of the Maghreb for so long, fatally wounding the Arab Maghreb Union<sup>66</sup>, is very hard to explain. Developments on the issue during 2007-2008 have not stirred the EMPA into action, at least visibly. In April 2007 the UN Security Council approved a resolution on the situation in the Western Sahara<sup>67</sup>.

Contacts later resumed between all the affected parties, primarily involving Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria and the POLISARIO and on 1 October 2007, Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs signalled to the UN General Assembly the possibility of a way out of this quagmire, citing the Moroccan Statute of Autonomy for the former Spanish Sahara as a «realistic, applicable and final political solution to a regional dispute that hinders the construction of a strong and homogeneous Maghreb, interacting with its geopolitical environment»<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> Resolution of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly on the assessment of the Barcelona Process on the eve of its tenth anniversary adopted on 15 March 2005 in Cairo: [www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/committee\\_poli/final\\_resolution\\_cairo2005\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/committee_poli/final_resolution_cairo2005_en.pdf) (accessed 11.10.07).

<sup>66</sup> See for instance, Francis Ghilès, «El Magreb paga el precio de su desunión. El cierre de la frontera entre Argelia y Marruecos es un disparate. Los magrebíes no tienen otra alternativa que abrir las fronteras que les separan y fomentar la libre circulación de personas, mercancías y energía», *El País*, 5 June 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Security Council Resolution adopted at the SC's 5669th meeting, 30 April 2007, S/RES/1754 (2007).

<sup>68</sup> Statement by HE Mohamed Benaissa, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of the Kingdom of Morocco to the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, 1 October 2007.

Algeria augurs a solution to the conflict and hopes the people of the territory will be able to vote in a «self-determination» referendum. The European Parliament has meanwhile frequently condemned human rights violations in the Western Sahara. But the EMPA seems to remain blissfully ignorant of a conflict that is at the very core of its *raison d'être* at a time when new developments may require the EMPA's encouragement and involvement.

Thus, the March 2008 Final Declaration of the Athens Fourth Plenary Session does not mention the conflict in the Western Sahara at all, nor does the Final Declaration adopted in Jordan in October 2008. The same is true of the 2009 and 2010 sessions. This is happening despite the fact that there is an impasse in the disputed region over the holding of a referendum on the future of the territory annexed by Morocco, an issue which also continues to poison relations between Algeria and Morocco and obstructs any progress that can be made on Maghrebi integration. The UN Security Council has extended the presence of the some 225-strong UN personnel mission in the Western Sahara to April 2011. Questions related to the suppression of human rights by the Moroccan authorities have been raised in the European Parliament particularly in respect of the Aminatou Haidar case. Haidar is one of several Saharawi human rights defenders who have been allegedly detained and tortured by the Moroccan authorities. Notwithstanding this and the importance which the EU accords to its external relations, the Commission did not feel that such violations do not merit the suspension of Morocco's Advanced Status agreement with the EU because it does not serve the interests of the EU<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> Answer given to an EP Question by Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner on behalf of the Commission, 9 February, 2010, E-6344/2009.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Our argument in this chapter can be summed up as follows:

First, the EMPA has monopolized its interest in conflict resolution solely on the Palestinian issue, even if initially it did not appear officially high on its agenda. In practice the conflict permeated the EMPA agenda at various levels usually to block any serious discussion on any subject, including the conflict itself.

Second, the other two conflicts, Cyprus and the Western Sahara, were kept off the agenda: the former in spite of efforts by (Greek-)Cypriot parliamentarians to the contrary and the opposing efforts by Turkish parliamentarians to make sure it stayed off the agenda. Arab parliamentarians appear to be on the whole indifferent to the Cyprus issue.

Third, this lack of progress on any of the three conflicts is counterproductive because it gives the wrong impression on many accounts: it can be shown as evidence that to date, parliamentary diplomacy cannot work; or that traditional diplomacy should not be blamed if the various problems are so intrinsically complicated to solve that even parliamentarians have found their way blocked by a brick wall.

No doubt, one should not blame parliamentary diplomacy for failing to solve problems if those problems are so difficult to solve that traditional diplomacy has not succeeded in doing so either. However, a fair criticism would be if the parliamentary tool is not being used properly, in the sense that it has not helped in any significant way; or if it has been «abused» for domestic petty interests: especially among parliamentarians from the Arab countries, who often «play for the gallery», as it were. The same is also often true among European

counterparts who know they can promise anything, criticize as much as they can, knowing very well that their respective governments would not budge on any set position. As for smaller political groupings who, due to the peculiarities of the EP electoral system (second order elections, protest vote, proportional representation), are present in the Parliament in Brussels/Strasbourg but often not in their home parliaments, they use either «populist» tactics, knowing that since they have no power, all they can milk out of EMPA is popularity; or, even go as far as to make «irresponsible» statements such as the one which points to the need of engaging with terrorist organisations —so defined according to the EU's own lists to which their countries already subscribe— but acting totally with double standards if similar arguments are made in their countries (*e. g.* with respect to domestic terrorism).

It is also true that the whole situation results from a number of «structural weaknesses» of the EMPA itself, mainly to do with who actually belongs to that institution: for instance, there is the perennial question about the utility of dialogue. For how long does one keep talking? Is it not better sometimes to make public clear and deep divergences of opinion? See for instance the «no meeting of minds» in the final declaration of the NATO and Southern Mediterranean meeting at Genova on 1 December 2000<sup>70</sup>. There is also the vexed topic of whether the EU is interested in stability or democracy in the Mediterranean. To use the words of a Belgian MP during the Second Forum (Moriau), one is entitled to argue that «*on ne bâtit pas la démocratie avec le déni de démocratie*».

Although to date the record of the parliamentary impact on conflict resolution is not that promising, one

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<sup>70</sup> NATO Parliamentary Assembly Press Release - Parliamentary Debate on Mediterranean Security yields little consensus, Genova, 1 December 2000, available on the web: [www.nato-pa.int/publications/press/p001201a](http://www.nato-pa.int/publications/press/p001201a).

should be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. It remains clear that there is a lot of potential in employing parliamentary diplomacy for conflict resolution, provided that this potential is actually acknowledged and that a conscious effort is made to use it. The main test of the efficacy (or otherwise) of parliamentary diplomacy in conflict resolution should not be the record so far, simply because if it has not been employed efficiently to date, then it is axiomatic that the results will not be the desired ones. Besides, parliamentary diplomacy is an activity which can produce results in the long term if it is vigorously pursued over time. The continuity (or otherwise) of parliamentarians in key parliamentary diplomacy initiatives is therefore important. The same is true of how long parliamentarians cover a given foreign policy dossier. The EP has now adopted a new measure in its internal rules whereby its international delegation members for a given region or a given country automatically remain in their post during the whole term of the Parliament (five years) and no longer only for half the term as it used to be (due to a renewal of the President every half term as a result of an informal agreement between the two leading political groupings in the House). This new rule facilitates at least some continuity, even if only in terms of time, in the international affairs of the Parliament <sup>71</sup>.

One must also stress that parliamentary diplomacy is a very recent phenomenon. Hence, it is not appropriate to compare its results with those of traditional diplomacy. Nor should one expect that parliamentary diplomacy alone can achieve what has not been achieved so far by the more traditional diplomatic methods in trying to resolve the Palestinian, Saharawi or Cypriot con-

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<sup>71</sup> Comments made by Dietmar Nikel during the debates that took place at the JORNADA de la Cátedra Jean Monnet del Profesor Garzón Clariana: Asamblea Euromediterránea en el marco de la Presidencia Española (Barcelona, 16 April 2010).

flicts either. Indeed, parliamentary diplomacy must be seen as one of a number of mutually reinforcing efforts and activities in international relations aiming to bring parties to conflicts closer to one another by increasing mutual understanding and access to one another, and by creating that environment of trust which is necessary to help diplomatic efforts. Hence, parliamentary diplomacy must be analysed and judged by (so far not fully articulated in the literature) its own set of criteria and objectives. For the time being, it is necessary to stress that in conflict situations, the stakes are too high, and that in such situations there is hardly any choice other than to keep on trying. Parliamentary cooperation can and should be used as often as possible. Our critique is that its main defect to date has been that it has not been used to its full potential in trying to resolve any of the Mediterranean Region's long standing conflicts.

The potential «bridge-making» role of parliamentary diplomacy in conflict resolution should not be underestimated. It is therefore surprising that a 2007 study on «Conflict Prevention in the EMP» does not even mention once the potential and actual role that parliaments can play in that area <sup>72</sup>.

The numerous conflicts that exist in the region must be resolved. In this context, though the EMPA started as the parliamentary dimension of the EMP and ought to

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<sup>72</sup> Euromesco, «Conflict Prevention in the EMP», *Euromesco Paper*, n.º 64 (Roberto Aliboni, Yasar Qatarneh), September 2007: [www.euromesco.net](http://www.euromesco.net). It is equally relevant to note that the same EUROMESCO Paper does not make a single reference to the Cyprus Conflict. We do not expand on the possible reasons for such an omission but we think any independent-minded observer would note the irony that the EUROMESCO «experts» survey did not include anyone from either Greece or Cyprus, though perhaps not surprisingly (*sic*) one from Turkey was included. This is not unique to EUROMESCO of course. For instance there were no representatives from Cyprus invited to a meeting on Turkey organized during the Spanish EU Presidency in April 2010 in Barcelona.

remain there, it does not imply that it must stick to the EMP agenda. The EMP was originally started to help bring about peace, security and a shared prosperity in the Mediterranean region; the Middle East problem and the other conflicts of the region (Cyprus and the Western Sahara) are the problems to be tackled, not the ones to run away from. As long as the main destabilising conflicts persist such as the Middle East, Cyprus and Western Sahara, the latter two often and misleadingly labelled the «frozen conflicts»<sup>73</sup>, it is hard to achieve progress on the «softer» issues; issue-linkage politics —whether subtle (covert) or open (overt)— connects the two. This is because states continue to link progress in one area to progress in the other. All the conflicts analyzed here have at one time or another been blamed for the lack of progress in regional co-operation of various types even when such co-operation was considered to be of a functional, non-political nature or better still was perceived as a sort of longer-term confidence building process that could lead to positive spill over into the political domain.

What seems to be essential is that in regional parliamentary initiatives such as the EMPA, participants are constantly reminded of the need to maintain their focus on the objectives of such initiative in conflict resolution. It is sad that often many national delegations behave just as the extension of their countries' diplomatic service often turning EMPA meetings into arenas for scoring propaganda points or for trying to influence the world views of European parliamentarians. It is time to call the parliamentarians to order and convince them to focus more radically on dialogue.

The absence of pluralistic democracies in the south where political parties and members of parliament

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<sup>73</sup> One can but only refer to the other so-called «frozen» conflict, like the one in Georgia which this summer of 2008 went «hot» at a «micro-wave oven» speed, to keep with the analogy.

need to maintain contact with constituencies and voters to stand any chance of re-election is already a serious handicap. The lack of pressure to be accountable to voters leaves southern politicians free from any constraint to produce results. In addition there is the problem of the visibility of the UfM and EMPA itself, the interest shown in them by the public and media. As long as both the UfM and the EMPA are not in the vortex of the public and media interest, and the recent UfM stalemate is an important setback in this respect, what happens in them and what the various participants do in them (including parliamentarians) will remain irrelevant and isolated, taking place in a bubble separated from the rest of the world. But should the EMPA become more forthcoming and pro-active on many issues, including conflict resolution, then the publics everywhere will become interested in it and what their parliamentarians are doing or not doing, given that there is near universal desire that existing conflicts ought to be resolved once and for all. The guiding star is simple and unproblematic: give the parliamentary assembly a credible, important role in conflict resolution and the public will focus on it thereby increasing its relevance and effectiveness. Allow it to languish in the desert of irrelevance and trivia, and the public will disregard it thereby devaluing it further as an effective political force for good.

It is becoming clear that the further deepening of the parliamentarization of the UfM is not perceived in good light by a number of participant states which have blocked its progress in the last two years. Hence in the foreseeable future, the EMPA restricted as it is to a consultative role, and as long as its parliamentarians from democratic countries do not lose patience with it and abandon it, is left with no alternative but to continue to pursue conflict resolution with the tools accessible to it. Had EMPA been given more powers it would have



been in a better position to play a more crucial role in conflict resolution and in reinvigorating the UfM itself when this stumbled soon after its birth —the July 2008 Paris summit.